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THE USES OF FILM EXTRACTS.

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The use of film extracts, either alone or with the whole feature encourages students to concentrate on a limited number of learning objectives whereas a full-length film frequently gives rise to confusion and vague generalization on the part of students. Extracts can be used to illustrate screen language, the style of the director, the history of the cinema, genres of films, or examples of themes. Through the careful and thoughtful selection of extracts, students are not denied the whole experience of the film, but are exposed to its technical and thematic elements with greater intensity. Extracts can also be used in conjunction with script reprints, sound track recordings from the feature, and still photographs. They can be made easily from the feature itself and, with public pressure, may soon be readily available from distributors. (DL)

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COVER Seeing with new eyes. From a poster by the School of Visual Arts, 209 E. 23rd St., N.Y., N.Y.

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The Uses of Film Extracts

by David Powell

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In a darkened classroom a group of sixteen-year-olds settle in as the projector starts running. A dark and turbulent night sky appears on the screen and the speaker blares a menacing anthem. The moon shines fitfully between the clouds. The sky lightens and the black silhouette of a hawk hovers against the clouds. Two figures lie prostrate on a pebble shore. One of the men rises and washes his face in the sea. Turning, he falls to his knees and raises his hands in prayer, but his lips form no words.

The projector stops and the image fades. The group begins to discuss what they have just seen and the opening of other films that they can compare to *The Seventh Seal*. They have a particular interest in the discussion as they have seen the feature the previous day and are presently trying to solve the problem of an opening for their own short film. The film extract helps them to be specific about the way in which a film may open and also leads to a discussion of the film itself as the extract had been carefully chosen so that it reflected the major theme of the film.

This description of an actual class session contains many of the arguments for the use of film extracts (sometimes called "clips"). In this particular case the extract was conveniently obtained by looking at the beginning of the entire print. A separate extract as such does not exist and so the extract can only be seen in this way. Normally this would be a ridiculous and impossibly expensive way of obtaining an extract.

Dave Powell needs little introduction to the majority of screen educators. He came to this country in 1964 from London (where he was an active member of the Society for Education in Film and Television) to bring his screen education experience to the classrooms of North Reading, Mass. He is the Schools Consultant of NSEC-Filmboard, and the co-ordinator, under Prof. Hodgkinson, of the ambitious North Reading Screen Education Project which began in September, financed by a grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Before we get drawn into the economics of producing and distributing extracts—a fascinating but frustrating pursuit—let us look at the very practical questions of what an extract is and why and how it may be used.

An extract is a portion of a feature chosen so that a film teacher may have a well-balanced and documented example available for use in the classroom. The extract can be used in a controlled situation within the limits of normal lesson time. The obvious comparison is a selection from an anthology. Both film and literary extracts must have a unity of their own and be chosen for maximum relevance to what is being taught. A poorly chosen extract will simply confuse and irritate, as it will leave too many loose ends concerning the whole film and the directors intentions. For example, the bedroom scene between David and his father in *David and Lisa* makes far less impact when shown without the preceding dinner table sequence which suggests the relationships among the mother, her husband, and David.

The great value of using extracts, both together with the feature and alone, is that the student is encouraged to concentrate on a more limited set of objectives and is consequently able to articulate his experience in more detail. This discussion comprises a real and acute perception of the details that make the whole. In contrast, even repeated viewing of features tends to result in vague generalizations which reflect the effort to cope with the sheer size of the experience. Where the whole feature may not be suitable owing to lack of audience appeal or great complexity, a particular extract from the film can be valuable and thoroughly enjoyable.

Extracts may be selected for a variety of reasons. They can be used to illustrate the history of the cinema, the language of the screen, the style of a director, the contribution of members of the production team; they can provide examples of kinds (genres) of film, examples of themes in films. Thus, *The Gold Rush*, *Billy Liar*, *8½*, *You*



The Seventh Seal/Janus Films

Only Live Twice (special effects), *Umberto D*, and *Ballad of a Soldier* would each illustrate these particular areas. However, each extract also illustrates some of the other areas. *Ballad of a Soldier* is an example of genre (Russian, war), a theme (young people and war), film language (the famous reverse shot at the beginning of the film), the cameraman's contribution (in the excellent and often poignant use of lighting). This doesn't mean to say that every extract should be milked to death, but that a good extract is not restricted to one use.

One of the prime objections to the use of extracts is the one often levelled at the literary anthology; namely, that the student is denied the whole experience. This need only be true where the extracts are used in a thoughtless and routine way. Just as ploughing through an anthology is fruitless and boring, so an unvaried diet of extracts dulls the senses. Extracts may of course be used alone to illustrate particular things; they are, however, much more effectively used together with others to articulate a theme. *A Generation*, *Reach for Glory* and *The Bridge* would take up the theme of young people in war. More effective still would be their use together with the entire *Ballad of a Soldier*, or as a contrast to *The Victors*. In this case the features would frame the extracts. When a package of feature and extract is used, the extract can be a simple memory-trigger to initially stimulate discussion. A number of extracts can be used to study a film not available to the students in the school. An example of this would be to study the opening sequences of *The Seventh Seal*, *Great Expectations* and *A Bad Day at Black Rock* and then to consider the interesting opening of *For a Few Dollars More* in the light of the other three.

The variety of uses for a single extract leads to the need for accompanying materials that explore these possible uses. In some cases script extracts, separate soundtrack recordings, and stills should also be included. This will provide the teacher with a variety of approaches beyond the one

originally chosen and also discourage a pedestrian approach or over-analysis of a particular factor.

It is dismaying to realize—after all this discussion—that few extracts exist at present. Those few distributed by Teaching Film Custodians (25 W. 43 St., New York, N.Y.) suffer from both

FILM SOURCES

Bad Day at Black Rock (color, 81 minutes)
Rental: Films Inc., 202 East 44th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. \$37.50 (INFOCARD 76)

Ballad of a Soldier (b/w, 89 minutes)
Rental: Audio Film Classics, 2138 East 75th St., Chicago, Illinois 60649. \$65.00 (INFOCARD 77)

Billy Liar (b/w, 96 minutes)
Rental: Continental 16, 241 East 34th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10016. \$60.00 (INFOCARD 78)

The Bridge (b/w, 112 minutes)
Rental: Ideal Pictures, 1010 Church St., Evanston, Illinois 60201. Inquire rental rate. (INFOCARD 79)

David and Lisa (b/w, 94 minutes)
Rental: Continental 16. \$75.00 (INFOCARD 80)

8½ (b/w, 135 minutes)
Rental: Fleetwood Films, Inc., 34 Macquesten Parkway South, Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10550. \$65.00 (INFOCARD 81)

Generation (color, 3 minutes)
Rental: Radim Films, 220 West 42nd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. \$5.00 (INFOCARD 82)

Great Expectations (b/w, 115 minutes)
Rental: Contemporary Films, Inc., 267 West 25th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10001. Inquire rental price. (INFOCARD 83)

Reach for Glory (b/w, 89 minutes)
Rental: Columbia Cinematheque, 711 Fifth Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10022. Inquire rental price. (INFOCARD 84)

The Seventh Seal (b/w, 96 minutes)
Rental: Janus Films, 24 West 58th St., N.Y., N.Y. Inquire Craig Oscarson for classroom rate. (INFOCARD 85)

Umberto D (b/w, 89 minutes)
Rental: Audio Film Classics. \$45.00 (INFOCARD 86)

The Victors (color, 147 minutes)
Rental: Audio Film Classics. \$25.00 (INFOCARD 87)

EXTRACTS FROM BRANDON

As if in answer to David Powell's plea in the above article, Brandon Films, Inc., has just announced a film extract program. This month, they will release excerpts from five of their titles (*Ikiru*, *La Strada*, *High Noon*, *The Trial*, *Nothing But a Man*) and in November will release seven more. They will be supplied only in connection with the feature of the same title. Study guides—pertinent to both the excerpt and the entire film—will be provided. Additional cost: \$10.00. Address inquiries to: Brandon Films, 221 West 57th St., New York, New York 10019.

age and a distinct tendency to be over-literary in their selection and approach. Film as film is rarely discussed in the study guides and little or no attempt is made to consider any of the other uses and methods of presentation outlined above. So why the fuss if there are no extracts?

There are a number of things that can be done now. Extracts can be selected from a feature and used the following day to help in discussion and analysis. Where the extract comes in the middle of a reel, small paper markers can be slipped in as the film comes on to the take-up reel to mark the beginning and end of the section. The film is then rewound to the second marker. In this way also, a soundtrack can be recorded for further study.

(This must be eventually erased, however, to avoid copyright problems.)

It is also possible to use previews in the same manner, if one can borrow them from a local theatre manager. (In which case, a 35mm projector will generally be needed.) In addition, the various ways of using extracts can be applied to television commercials.

The final and most vital reason for devoting space to the use of extracts is their already successful use in other countries and the attitude of the distributors in this country. In Britain for example, extracts have helped to solve the often crippling problems of time and money by making low budget lessons possible. There, the distributors have, after some considerable resistance, seen the value of extracts to teachers and themselves. In this country there is a general reluctance to release extracts owing to a (apparent) lack of demand and general lack of knowledge about the value and uses of such materials. This situation is likely to change if there is public expression of need. The distributors also need to be convinced that in the long run extracts can only lead to more feature bookings. Let us hope that a planned series of extracts will soon be available to the (distributors: please note) growing numbers of screen education teachers and their students.